In Creating Connections

Museum of Anthropology

Our Framing

we propose to design

an immersive exhibition that lets visitors discover context on indigenous cultures through interactive displays

which will have the effect of

guiding visitors through a more digestible and experiential learning experience

so that visitors are

both informed and inspired by their cultural exploration.

In order to

enhance the visitor experience at the Museum of Anthropology

for visitors seeking to

learn about indigenous cultures through interactive engagement

Problem Statements

1

Visitors to MOA are exposed to a rich variety of world arts and culture, but are unable to associate emotional depth and connection to the artifacts that they are learning about.

2

The museum's intention is to offer context for the cultures it explores. MOA has become more informative yet what's left is a desire for a deeper connection to the artifacts they are looking at.

3

The current MOA experience can feel more observational and passive than immersive, limiting visitors' ability to form meaningful memories that they can associate with the information they are learning.

4

For the visitor who yearns for a memorable experience, interactive discoveries like the drawers and bone box immerse them in the story that the artifacts tell, but this is lost when clues and identifiers are unclear

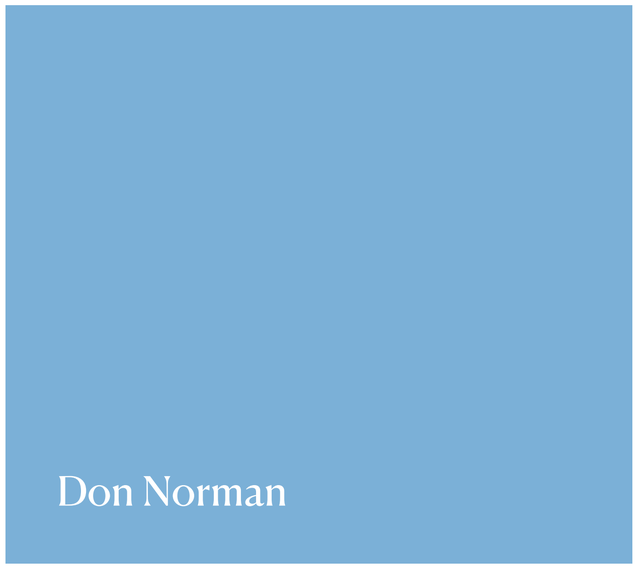
Core Insights

1

Moggridge shifted the focus from designing static objects to designing the dynamic interactions between people and products over time. He championed the idea that an interaction should feel like a coherent, engaging conversation.

2

Drawing on Don Norman's ideas of affordances and feedback, visitors need clear cues and responsive interactions that guide exploration and foster emotional connection, turning passive observation into an engaging, self-directed experience.



Triple H Model

Head

- Providing context in which the totem should be represented in and learning each meaning of the different creations
- Providing the right context so the visitors have proper knowledge on the totem poles rather than misinterpreting them
- Learning the stories, icons and heritage from the North Coast art
- Recognizing the Indigenous culture works when finding other totem poles outside of the museum

Heart

- Feel a piece of fulfillment, as they came all the way to the museum
- Feel empathy and respect towards the indigenous groups for the skills and knowledge put into their work
- Feel motivated to learn more about the different Indigenous art works

Hand

- How to identify and classify the different pole types (mortuary, house frontal, etc.)
- Teaching the narrative structure of how to read the pole properly (Levels of crests and rights)
- How to identify indicators of different cultures' visual language (formlines, ovoids)

*PRIMARY USER PERSONA

Jacob Lee

56, Parent

As the parent of a student at UBC, Jacob is passing through MOA to seek personal enrichment through authentic and immersive cultural experiences

Goals:

1. Experience cultural learning in an intuitive and experiential way rather than academic
2. Experience the museum as a time-passing experience and form of mental reset
3. They enjoy sharing experiences with a partner or friend — cultural exploration as quality time

Barriers

- Information overload
- Time constraints – need a key memory of the exhibition that they can take home (because he might not want to read a lot of the context provided)
- Lack of narrative flow

Needs

- Flexibility in learning pace (well-paced information delivery)
- Immersive and engaging experience that stimulates the senses

Motivation

He wants to seek personal enrichment through authentic and immersive cultural experiences.

*SECONDARY USER PERSONA

Emma Liu

22, UBC Student

Emma is a UBC student that studies in Arts and is looking to learn deeply about anthropology so she can apply it to her studies in school.

Goals:

1. Gain more cultural literacy to understand anthropological, indigenous arts & cultures
2. Connect what is learned within the museum to academic or creative projects
3. Experience the museum in a way that allows her to connect and participate in dialogue between cultures.

Barriers

- Information overload/dense text
- Technical/interactive friction – unsure of what kind of information can be found at each touchpoint

Needs

- Clear and accessible cultural context
- An interactive experience
- Inspiration for creative or academic work

Motivation

She wants to learn deeply about anthropology (more specifically indigenous-related anthropology)

Totem Journey

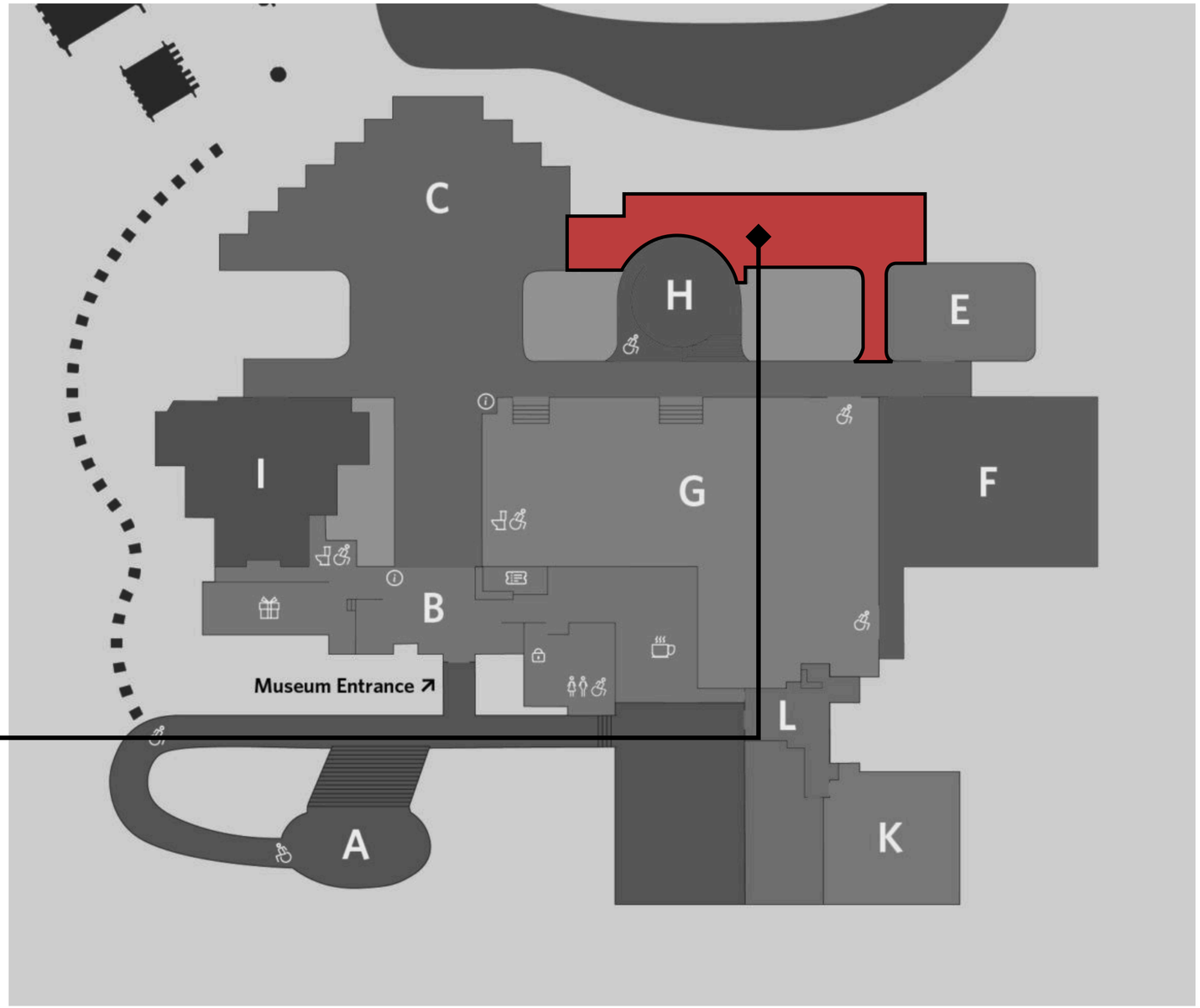
Making Indigenous culture accessible through hands-on learning and immersive storytelling

The Totem Journey is an immersive multimedia experience that places the visitor in the world of Northwest Coast peoples. It starts in a narrative room, where the visitor hears stories told by indigenous voices of their culture's history and an overview on the context surrounding totem poles. After that, they emerge into a simulated outdoor exploration area via projectors and digital screens. There they can learn about specific totems by grabbing their miniatures and placing them on sensor docks - called Totem Circles.

Narrative room on the left, Outdoor Exploration on the right.

Where it Will Be

"An interaction should feel like a coherent, engaging conversation."



The O'Brian Gallery

This exhibition will be located in the O'Brian Gallery, which is situated on the right side of the main hall. This gallery is the only way forward for visitors that doesn't involve backtracking, and therefore we want to continue to fascinate visitors and give them deeper background for Northwest Coast cultures before they continue into the rest of the museum. Currently, the O'Brian Gallery has the temporary exhibit Nuxalk Strong, however it is leaving January 4, 2026 so we will not be taking it over.

Zone 1

Zone 2

The Exhibit

1. Welcome sign explaining the exhibit to visitors
2. Display cases of relevant artifacts
3. Longhouse screens display narrative information about totems and potlatches.
4. Longhouse doorway to enter into zone 2
5. Bentwood box containing statuettes for interactive experience
6. Upright totem segments on display
7. Crest Circle
8. Culture Circle
9. Craft Circle
10. In-progress totem laying down, with carving tooles nearby

Zone 1
Entrance

Introduction To Exhibit: Narrative Room

This rooms welcomes visitors, taking them through a totem-inaugurating potlatch with storytellers on digital screens. This zone provides context for visitors when moving onto the next room, as well as immersing them in the context and narrative.

Zone 2 How it Works

At the entrance of Zone 2, visitors will find a box containing miniature figures representing the totem pole from the Great Hall. Each totem figure can be placed on any of the 3 Totem Circles. After placing it, information will appear on the wall, providing context about the chosen totem pole. Each portal in the room has a different concept such as history, symbolism, or craftmanship. This allows the visitors to learn something new of the figure they have selected,

This totem began as a house frontal totem pole. A frontal pole can often be identified by the portal at the bottom, which was a distinct ceremonial entry to the longhouse the pole was attached to.
Also depicted are two eagle profiles
Depicted on the totem is the Hokhohw bird. It is one of the ***crests*** *of the tribe - crests band identifers that are based on mythological encounters with supernatural animals like the Hokhohw bird in the tribe's history*

The Crest Circle

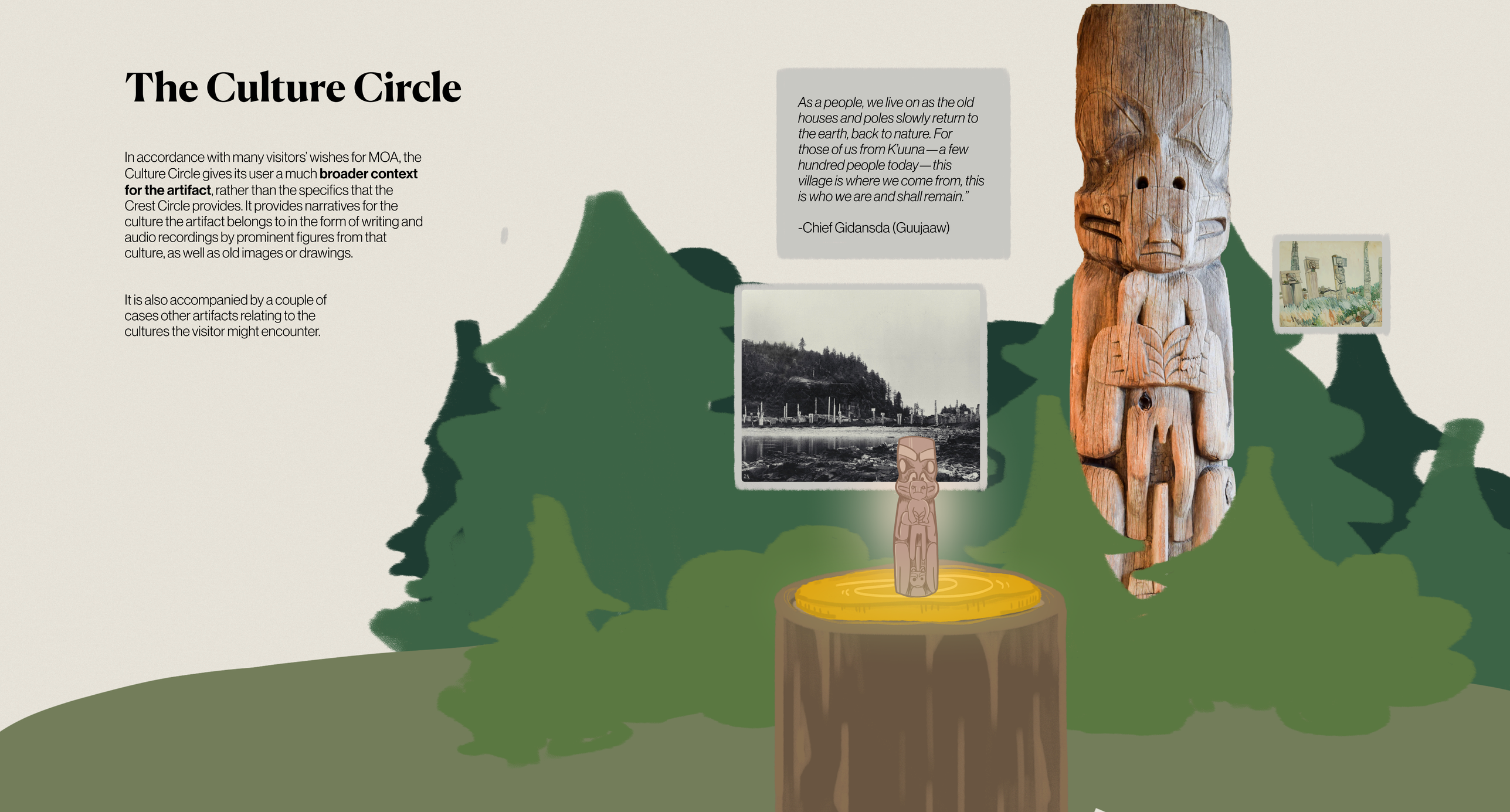
Upon placing a statuette on one of the Totem Circles, its associated totem will rise into the air via projection/digital screen on the wall.

For the Crest Circle, it will be accompanied by information about the ***iconography of the animals depicted*** on the pole, as well as the ***meaning behind this specific totem.*** In addition to projected information boxes, audio commentary will play from an indigenous community member who has a connection to the totem, as well as historical images.

The Culture Circle

In accordance with many visitors' wishes for MOA, the Culture Circle gives its user a much **broader context for the artifact**, rather than the specifics that the Crest Circle provides. It provides narratives for the culture the artifact belongs to in the form of writing and audio recordings by prominent figures from that culture, as well as old images or drawings.

It is also accompanied by a couple of cases other artifacts relating to the cultures the visitor might encounter.


As a people, we live on as the old houses and poles slowly return to the earth, back to nature. For those of us from K'uuna—a few hundred people today—this village is where we come from, this is who we are and shall remain."

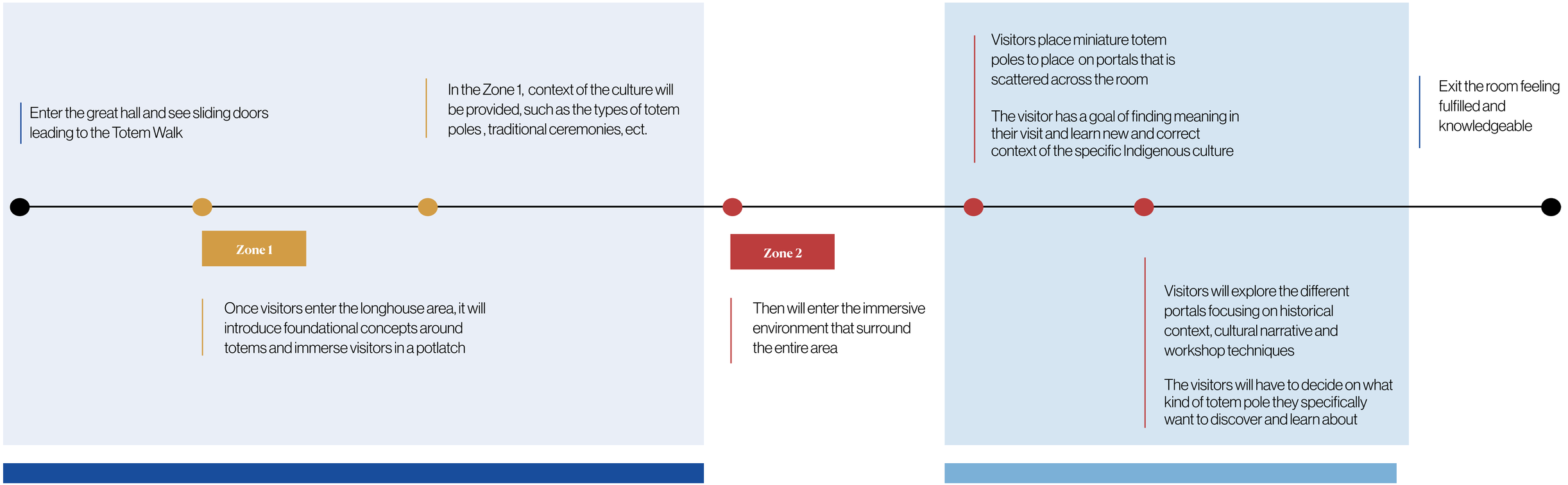
-Chief Gidansda (Guujaaw)

The Craft Circle

Lastly, the Craft Circle appeals to visitors who want to know more about totem-making as an art and as a craft, as well as its history. It projects exclusive videos of artists explaining techniques and their cultural history. Additionally, as concepts are referred to (like ovoids or formlines, corresponding areas on the nearby physical totem pole will be highlighted.

This Totem, made in the 1890s, would have been made using traditional tools like chisels, adzes, and knives. It contains hallmarks of Haida visual grammar such as ovoids (the semicircular pieces used in eyes) and formlines, the fluid curved pieces found all over.

User Journey


Enter the great hall and see sliding doors leading to the Totem Walk
In the Zone 1, context of the culture will be provided, such as the types of totem poles , traditional ceremonies, ect.
Zone 1
Once visitors enter the longhouse area, it will introduce foundational concepts around totems and immerse visitors in a potlatch
Zone 2
Then will enter the immersive environment that surround the entire area
Visitors place miniature totem poles to place on portals that is scattered across the room
The visitor has a goal of finding meaning in their visit and learn new and correct context of the specific Indigenous culture
Visitors will explore the different portals focusing on historical context, cultural narrative and workshop techniques
The visitors will have to decide on what kind of totem pole they specifically want to discover and learn about
Exit the room feeling fulfilled and knowledgeable
Introducing Visitor To The Experience
Touchpoint

Why We Are Doing This

Want to transform the Great Hall into a **more meaningful story** even though the architecture is nice, it has many **missing context to** it

Creating something for the visitors to not just looking at something that they only think looks nice, but to turn those artifacts into **something that would build their curiosity** and feel more connected to it (have them emotionally invested)

Instead of having the visitors just looking at the displays, they would **walk through the experience** of the story

Why It Matters To Our Stakeholders

Visitor: with this idea, it makes them explore and discover in a way they can retain the information and remember the experience in a fun way. Freely walk through the space with a curious and open mindset

Visitor: have their visit feel more meaningful and not leave any confusion by the end of their visit

Museum: with this idea, it fulfills the educational part of the museum, giving accurate context and really focussing on Indigenous stories. Filling in any gaps of the missing information from the signs.

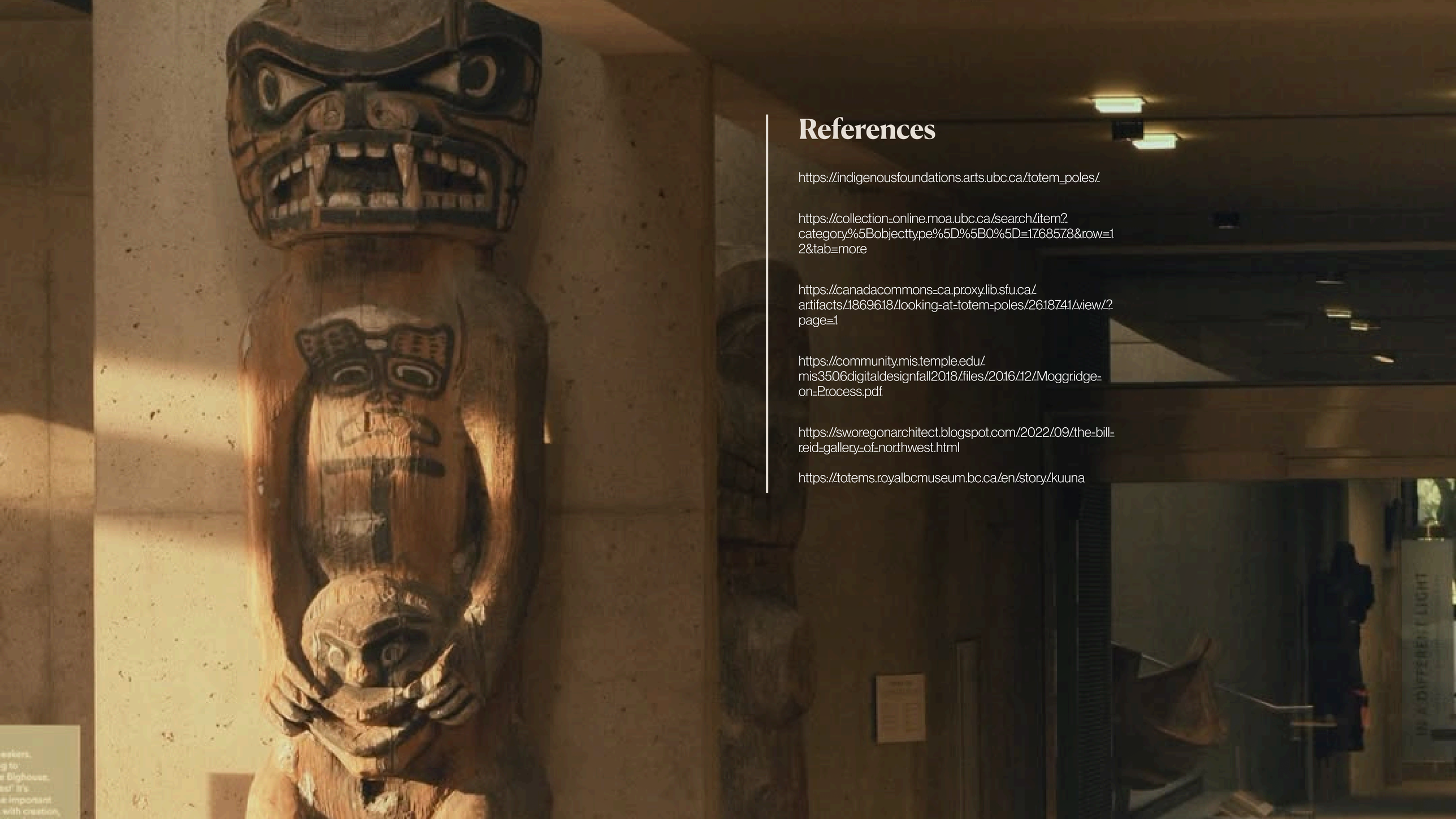
Why Is It Important

Having the visitors to do/ interact with something to **get information** rather than just walking up to a sign and reading it (feels like a treasure hunt)

Having the visitors control on what kind of totem pole they specifically want to learn about makes them **feel more invested** into the information because it is close to their interest

Learning about the different Indigenous animals carved on the totem pole may be difficult to understand, so when they choose their figure, it **makes it easier for them to understand** the context and remember it better

A way to **have more flow in the area**, different people can look at different parts of the room (screen, items, ect) instead of crowding in one section



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